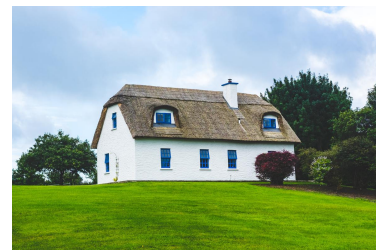




From the Pastor

At the Feb. 26 start of Lent on Ash Wednesday last year, people were filing into churches in the United States and all over the world to receive ashes and to begin their 40 days of fasting and penance. At that point, only people arriving at airports from China were being screened and there were 60 cases of the coronavirus in the country, primarily from 40+ passengers who had been on a single cruise ship.



The first Sunday of Lent was pretty typical, but by the second week, some church bodies began urging parishes to abandon handshaking and hugging during the passing of the peace and from sharing the common cup during Communion. By the next week, many synods were discouraging having public services and by March 22nd churches were advised to tell congregants to stay at home to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

And now, nearly one year later, with many public places shuttered or restricted, and a country practicing its long term of self-distancing and self-quarantining, we are only now slowly crawling out of our quarantined state once again to begin another round of live worship, and carefully tiptoeing forward. Add the extreme inclement weather at the end of January through February with the worst powerline and tree damage in this area in over 20 years and saying it has been a year like no other is clearly an understatement! And we are not out of the woods just yet, as it may take some months before mass vaccinations have been administered and the virus is well under control. Who could have dreamed?

I would like to say a word of thanks to the tireless efforts of our first responders and to the medical personnel that continue to work to help those who have been impacted by this terrible virus and bring about a potential slowing down of the spreading through giving out vaccines in our community. Also, to all of those involved in the continued cleanup efforts and recover after the ice storms that have left many without power and with tree/property damage and debris. Our prayers are with all that have been impacted by the ice storms and the families and loved ones impacted by COVID.

This year's Lent was not normal right from the outset. We changed the method to administer ashes to those who came in person to the Ash Wednesday service using face masks/shields and Q-tips to remain safe in our time of observance. For most, this year will likely be a year of "self" atonement. But many have pointed out that it will not change in terms of the penitential qualities tied to this health crisis—the suffering, giving up and solitude—are in fact symbolic of Lent's spiritual practice of self-denial.

Even the very word, quarantine, means 40, in French, which stems from its Latin origin, "quadraginta, ". This symbolism is not lost on many. A number of Bible scholars have compared the notion of quarantine to Christ's 40 days in the desert and the 40 days of Lent. The idea that we have been keeping in isolation and distancing ourselves from one another to prevent coronavirus spread, could also be viewed as a period of retreat with extra time for prayer or spiritual reading especially during the Lenten season.

In fact, this current situation could be viewed as our opportunity to be in the desert like Jesus, with time away in solitary prayer. What could be more Lenten? With the halt to normal routines for many, at a minimum, we now have extra time to spend in prayer each day — prayer that is greatly needed to seek eternal rest for the dead, to remember those who are sick and living in great fear, for our health care workers who remain on the front lines of this disease, and for one another. We may never again have a Lenten season that affords us

so much time to give to the Lord. Let us use this time wisely and well!

Along with extra time to pray, the ongoing pandemic also offers us a heightened perspective of the language of Lent. When we begin Lent with the (self) imposition of ashes and the reminder, 'From dust you have come and to dust you shall return, we are given an opportunity to become focused on the finiteness and fragility of human life—this is one of the spiritual lessons of the coronavirus.

The challenge imposed by the spreading virus also contains a built-in penance that no one asked for, which may cause some people to ask if they still have to give up something else for Lent. These initial sacrifices that some pledged last February were made prior to the country's complete shift to the point where everyone is giving something up from mundane items to time with friends and family at public places and the far more tragic losses of jobs, health, family members and friends.

Lent is a time to embrace both personal penances and "penances that choose you".

This past year has offered us challenges we've never had to face before. We mostly could attend church only virtually. Our normal routines have been disrupted. We worry about ourselves and our loved ones. Some of us may even need to fight the virus itself. This pandemic will once again make the current Lenten season dramatically different. Yet Lent remains what it has always been: "A time to get in better touch with God's love for us and do our best to 'spring clean' our souls in preparation for the glory of Easter."

This year let this Lenten season also become a time to think about how we live as a community, how we protect each other from illness, how we clothe the naked and feed the poor, shelter the homeless, and how we can be part of the solution to a global health crisis. Let us meet these challenges, and maybe even bring about new and better ways of taking care of each other in the years to come. Let us allow God's light to shine from us to dispel the dreary darkness that others might not be able to overcome as we lead them toward the promise of Easter. I believe in all of you. God's peace be with you.

Pastor Tim

VBC Preschool

Victoria Baptist Church Nursery School students have had a fun-filled month learning about love and history while celebrating Valentine's Day and President's Day. Each school day brings a greater understanding of J.O.Y.,

long-lasting love for Jesus first, others second, and finally, yourself. The students also shared a fascination of things that happened long ago during a study of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. Thank you to everyone for all of your support!



Observance of Passover/Seder Meal

On March 30, there will be an observance of the Passover/Seder meal led by Jews for Jesus. This will be led virtually and will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Lenten Devotions

February 17 began the observance known as "Lent", the forty days leading up to Easter. We started last year the tradition of extinguishing a candle on the Lenten Wreath on the Sundays of Lenten, symbolizing the darkening of the days leading up to our Lord's crucifixion.



This year, I am drawing from the overwhelming positive feedback received for the church Advent Devotion and extend this to Lent. So, if you would be willing to write a "Lenten" devotion much like we did our Advent Devotional this past year, let the church office know and submit them to Anna or Tim at office@victoriabaptistchurch.com. We will post on Facebook and email these devotions throughout the days of Lent (minus Sundays you will have the Sunday morning message and Lenten Wreath observance).

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Tithes and Offerings



As we strive to maintain the ministry of our church, we hope and pray you will continue to tithe during this time.

For online bill pay or mail in offerings (please no cash), send to:

P.O. Box 911
Victoria, VA 23974

We have added online giving and text giving for your convenience. There is no charge to the church or you to use it through the rest of this calendar year. To give you have three options now:

1. Mail
in
Offering
2. [Click here to give](#)
3. Text
GiveVBC
to
73256

We appreciate your faithful support to Victoria Baptist Church as we weather these difficult days.

BUDGET FUND RECAP JANUARY 2021 YTD

BUDGET: \$15,685

ACTUAL: \$11,544

DEFICIT: \$4,141

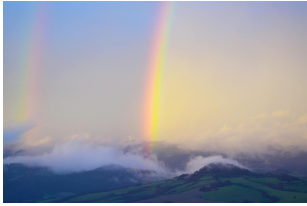
OUR GIFTS TO GOD FOR 2/21/2021

REGULAR OFFERING (weekly goal \$3,619.67) \$3,558.00

BUILDING FUND \$280.00

FOOD PANTRY \$10.00

TOTAL \$3,844.00



Remember Those on our Prayer List and Our Shut-Ins During this Difficult Time:

PRAYER LIST UPDATES - Names in bold print are new this week to our prayer list or are experiencing new difficulties. If you have a family member or loved one on our prayer list, please contact the Church Office with an update. If the Lord has answered prayers and all is well, please ask us to remove their name from our list.

You can help our shut-ins by writing a letter, sending a card or giving a call! Phone calls are an especially good way for them to hear your voice and be comforted during this time of isolation. No visitors please as we observe social distancing and respect the rules of nursing and care facilities.

PRAYER CONCERNS 2/28/2021

Members Who Need Prayer

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bay Tomlinson | Peggy Green |
| Susan Hawks | Vernon and Jean Harding |
| Millie and Jon Coffman | Tammy Moody |
| Dianne Griffin | Suzi Sherwood |
| Stephanie Millican Powell | Ella Harrell |
| Peppi and Gary Dayton | Lucille Wood |
| Elizabeth Lacks | Alice Mauer |
| Claude Tomlinson | Holly Crenshaw |
| Roger Pennell | |

In Our Community - Keep In Your Prayers

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Philip Kallam | Jonathan Stroup |
| Nancy Green | Brandon Moody |
| Martha Clark | Ray Martin |
| Helen Fitzgerald | Peggy Townsend |
| Cecil Ryman | Danny Dawson |
| Dr. Andrew Apostle | Carol Driver |
| Rev. Mike Day | Kevin Ashworth |
| Amanda Garrison | |

SYMPATHY to the family and friends of Mary Baughan

PRAYER LIST UPDATES - Names in bold print are new this week to our prayer list or are experiencing new difficulties. If you have a family member or loved one on our prayer list, please contact the Church Office with an update. If the Lord has answered prayers and all is well, please ask us to remove their name from our list. We want to include everyone who needs our prayers, so please keep us informed. Thank you.

AWAY FROM HOME PRAYER CONCERNS

| | |
|---|---|
| Phyllis Hood Heritage Hall 900 S. Main Street Blackstone, VA 23824 | Nancy Smith Hundley Center 125 Buena Vista Circle South Hill, VA 23970 |
| Waynie Pennell Chase City Nursing and Rehab 5539 Highway 49 Chase City, VA 23924 | Anne Hudson Heritage Hall, Room 203 900 S. Main Street Blackstone, VA 23824 |
| Betty Schumaker Amelia Nursing and Rehabilitation Center 8830 Virginia Street Amelia, VA 23002 | Jackie Clement Heritage Hall, Room 126 900 S. Main Street Blackstone, VA 23824 |
| Faye Loury Heritage Hall 900 S. Main Street Blackstone, VA 23824 | |

SHUT-INS

Linda Ramsey, 1530 5th Street, Victoria, 23974
Louie and Jean Overton, 2003 6th Street, Victoria, VA 23974
Betty and Aubrey Lindsey, 1505 Tidewater Avenue, Victoria, VA 23974



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